

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A process for producing a filler-reinforced thermoplastic polymer composition as an article which comprises:

(a) extrusion melt-forming through a die in a first extruder a mixture of a high melting temperature thermoplastic polymer with a first melting temperature with a metal salt, wherein the salt is present in an amount between about 2.5 and 5 percent by weight of the polymer which reduces the melting temperature of the mixture to a second lower melting temperature to form first strands; and

(b) pelletizing the first strands to form second pellets; and

~~(b)~~ (c) extruding a mixture of introducing a filler and the second pellets in a second extruder, ~~which degrades at the first melting temperature, into the mixture~~ at the second melting temperature or less without degrading the filler to form second strands of the filler-reinforced thermoplastic polymer composition.

2. (Original) The process of Claim 1 wherein the filler is a cellulose.

3. (Original) The process of Claim 1 wherein the filler is a cellulosic fiber.

4. (Original) The process of Claim 1, 2, or 3 wherein the thermoplastic polymer is selected from the group consisting of nylon, polyethylene terephthalate (PET), polybutylene terephthalate (PBT), polytrimethylterephthalate (PTT), ethylene carbon monoxide (ECM), propylene oxide (PPO), polystyrene copolymer blends, polyacetals, cellulose butyrate, acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene (ABS), methyl methacrylates, polychlorotrifluoroethylene polymers, and mixtures thereof.

5. (Original) The process of Claim 1, 2, or 3 wherein the metal in the metal salt forms a reaction product with the polymer in the melt.

6. (Original) The process of Claim 1, 2, or 3 wherein the metal salt is a metal halide.

7. (Original) The process of Claim 1 wherein the thermoplastic polymer composition is molded into a shape.

Claim 8 (Cancelled)

9. (Original) The process of Claim 1 wherein the filler further includes a glass or high melting temperature polymer fiber.

10. (Currently Amended) A process for producing an article from a fiber-reinforced thermoplastic polymer composition which comprises:

(a) extrusion melt-forming through a die in a first extruder a mixture of a high melting temperature thermoplastic polymer with a first melting temperature with at least one metal salt selected from the group consisting of lithium chloride, lithium bromide, lithium iodide, copper chloride, zinc chloride, aluminum chloride, gallium chloride, and mixtures thereof wherein the salt reduces the melting point of the mixture to a second lower melting temperature to form first strands;
and

(b) pelletizing the first strands from second pellets;

~~(b)~~ (c) introducing extruding a mixture of one or more fibers and the second pellets in a second extruder, which degrade at the first melting point, into the mixture at the second melting point or less without degrading the fibers to form second strands of the fiber-reinforced thermoplastic polymer composition; and
(d) melt-forming an article from the second strands.

11. (Original) The process of Claim 10 wherein the fibers are selected from the group consisting of hemp, flax, kenaf, jute, sisal, pineapple leaf fiber, coir, henequen, pure cellulose in its various forms, corn, cotton, and mixtures thereof.

12. (Original) The process of Claim 10 wherein the fiber-reinforced composition further includes a maleated compatibilizer and one or more toughening agents selected from the group consisting of rubber, modified rubber, maleated rubber, epoxidized rubber, vegetable oil-based plasticizer, and mixtures thereof.

13. (Original) The process of Claim 10, 11, or 12 wherein the thermoplastic polymer is selected from the group consisting of nylon, polyethylene terephthalate (PET), polybutylene terephthalate (PBT), polytrimethylterephthalate (PTT), ethylene carbon monoxide (ECM), propylene oxide (PPO), polystyrene copolymer blends, polyacetals, cellulose butyrate, acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene (ABS), methyl methacrylates, polychlorotrifluoroethylene polymers, and mixtures thereof.

14. (Original) The process of Claim 10, 11, or 12 wherein the metal in the metal salt forms a reaction product with the thermoplastic polymer in the melt.

15. (Original) The process of Claim 10 wherein the fiber-reinforced thermoplastic polymer composition is molded into a shape.

Claim 16 (Cancelled)

17. (Currently Amended) The process of Claim 10 wherein a glass or high melting temperature polymer fiber is introduced with the fibers in step (c) ~~(b)~~.

18. (Currently Amended) A process for producing a filler-reinforced thermoplastic polymer composition as an article which comprises:

(a) extrusion melt-forming through a die in a first extruder a mixture of a thermoplastic polymer with a melting temperature at about 200° C or above with at least one metal salt, wherein the salt is present in an amount between about 2.5 and 5 percent by weight of the polymer which reduces the melting temperature of the mixture to less than about 200° C to form first strands;

and

(b) palletizing the first strands to form second pellets; and

~~(b)~~ (c) extruding a mixture of introducing the filler and the second pellets in a second extruder, which degrades at 200° C or above, into the mixture at less than 200° C without degrading the filler to form second strands the filler-reinforced thermoplastic polymer composition.

19. (Original) The process of Claim 18 wherein the thermoplastic polymer is selected from the group consisting of nylon, polyethylene terephthalate (PET), polybutylene terephthalate (PBT), polytrimethylterephthalate (PTT), ethylene carbon monoxide (ECM), propylene oxide (PPO), polystyrene copolymer blends, polyacetals, cellulose butyrate, acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene (ABS), methyl methacrylates, polychlorotrifluoroethylene polymers, and mixtures thereof.

20. (Original) The process of Claim 18 wherein the filler is selected from the group consisting of hemp, flax, kenaf, jute, sisal, pineapple leaf fiber, coir, henequen, pure cellulose in its various forms, corn, cotton, and mixtures thereof.

21. (Original) The process of Claim 18 wherein the metal salt is selected from the group consisting of lithium chloride, lithium bromide, lithium iodide, copper chloride, zinc chloride, aluminum chloride, gallium chloride, and mixtures thereof.

22. (Original) The process of Claim 18 wherein the filler further includes a glass or high melting temperature polymer fiber.

Claims 23 - 29 (Cancelled)